

Boycott Hits Cafeteria At Pentagon

Boycotters made a dent in Pentagon cafeteria business in their first formal boycott to protest-increased prices and poor service.

Arthur W. Ferguson, general manager for Knott's Pentagon Cafeterias, a division of the Knott Hotels based in New York, acknowledged that business yesterday was off 20 percent by his rough estimate. Their three cafeterias in the Pentagon normally serve 13,000 lunches a day, he said.

Asked what effect the boycott might have, Ferguson said, "If the people don't want it, we will have to trim it down to the size of the population that supports it."

Ferguson, who has worked for several firms operating Pentagon cafeterias since 1942, observed that complaints about service are seldom heard except when prices are raised. The increase Jan. 19 was the fourth of fifth approved by the Defense Department's concessions committee since Knott took over in 1956, he said.

Examples of the action that prompted an anonymous protest leaflet to appear last month:

Creamed chipped beef on toast, formerly 20 cents, now 35; one egg, 10 cents to 15 cents; Danish pastry, 10 to 15 cents; entrees previously 40 cents, now 45 cents; entrees previously 50 cents, now 55 cents.

Ferguson said rising food and labor costs — especially the latter — forced the company to seek a 10 percent increase in sales revenue. In the past two years, he said, an increase in the minimum wage law and contract negotiations raised the minimum pay from \$1.40 an hour to \$1.75 for the 380 workers in lower-level jobs.

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